



Metro Pacific Tollways South (MPT South), a subsidiary of Metro Pacific Tollways Corporation (MPTC), is gearing up for the anticipated surge in motorists during the upcoming Holy Week observance in 2024.

The toll road operator foresees an 8% to 10% rise in vehicle traffic on its toll roads, including the Cavite-Laguna Expressway (CALAX) and Manila-Cavite Expressway (CAVITEX), as well as its C5 Link segment. This increase is expected from Monday, March 25, to Sunday, March 31, from the usual 43,000 daily traffic on CALAX, 170,000 on CAVITEX, and 12,300 on C5 Link.

MPT South is re-activating its "Safe Trip Mo, Sagot Ko" motorist assistance program and elevating operational readiness to cater to motorists' needs to address this surge. Additional manpower will be deployed for services including traffic management, toll collection, standby emergency medical services, and incident response teams. Motorist assistance remains accessible through 24/7 Customer Service Centers, a 24/7 Customer Care Hotline at 1-35000, and 24/7 social media channels (Facebook: fb.com/cavitepressway, fb.com/Official-CALAX, Twitter: twitter.com/



caviteXpressway, twitter.com/OfficialCALAX) to ensure a hassle-free journey.

During the period, free towing will be provided for CLASS 1 vehicles up to the nearest exit, available from 6AM on March 22 to 6AM of March 25, 2024; 6AM of March 27 to 6AM of March 29, 2024; and 6AM of March 30 until 6AM of April 1, 2024. Construction and lane closures along the carriageway will also be suspended unless safety repairs are necessary.

Mr. Raul L. Ignacio, President and General Manager of MPT South, emphasized the importance of RFID for toll transactions to streamline motorists' journeys. "Utilizing Easytrip RFID at MPTC Toll Plazas significantly reduces travel time

compared to waiting in long cash lanes." Motorists were also encouraged to download the MPT DriveHub app to efficiently manage their Easytrip RFID account and receive real-time traffic updates across various MPTC toll roads.

"Furthermore," Mr. Ignacio added, "Poor vehicle maintenance remains a leading cause of breakdowns on expressways, causing inconvenience to motorists. With an anticipated increase in holiday travel during Holy Week, we advise motorists to conduct a thorough BLOWBAGETS check on their vehicles before hitting the road for a smoother travel experience."

BLOWBAGETS, an acronym for battery, lights, oil, water, brake, air, gas, engine, tire, and self, serves as a comprehensive checklist for vehicle maintenance.



MPTC, the largest toll road developer and operator in the country, manages a vast network of toll roads including CALAX, CAVITEX, North Luzon Expressway (NLEX), NLEX Connector Road, Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEX), and Cebu-Cordova Link Expressway (CCLEX) in Cebu.PR

SMFB delivers record profit of P38.1 billion in 2023 P 4

DTI Laguna guides entrepreneurs to invest in the right franchise



Calamba City, Laguna — On February 15, 2024, the Philippine Franchise Association in collaboration with the Department of Trade and Industry – Laguna Provincial Office (DTI-Laguna), Cooperatives and Livelihood Development Department (CLDD) of the City Government of Calamba, and the Calamba Business Chamber successfully conducted the "Be Your Own Boss: How to Invest in the Right Franchise Seminar in Calamba, Laguna" for chamber members and non-members.

Marcos signs 5 new laws



PGC's Medical Mission Brings Vital Healthcare Services to Julian Felipe, Cavite City

A successful medical mission was conducted in Julian Felipe, Cavite City on March 13, 2024 providing essential healthcare services to underserved residents through the collaborative efforts of medical professionals, local government officials, volunteers, and Barangay Health Workers (BHW).

The event garnered substantial support and participation from the community with the presence of Board Member Ram Revilla, Mayor Denver Chua, Andrienne Mark B. Ng, Chief Political Affairs Officer, SK Federation President, and staff from the office of 1st District Congressman Jolo Revilla.



mission witnessed the convergence of expertise and compassion, with a diverse team of healthcare professionals offering a range of services including medical consultations, preventive screenings, and distribution of essential medications. Additionally, vital health education sessions were conducted to empower residents with knowledge for healthier living practices.

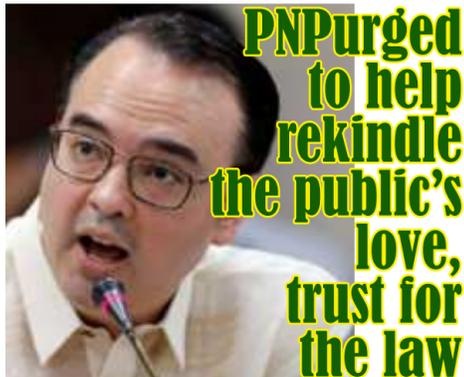
The resounding success of the mission was emphasized by the overwhelming turnout, with 599 residents benefiting from the healthcare services provided. - Romelyn P. Dones

'No permit, no exam' prohibition law has safeguard for private schools

Solon: Exhaust all efforts to provide gov't services to OFWs



PNPurged to help rekindle the public's love, trust for the law



VP Sara assures immediate action on voucher program discrepancies



DILG urges public to join BIDA Walk, support fight vs. illegal drugs



POINT OF VIEW

HEALTH HINTS FOR ELDERLY FROM AGES 45 TO 100 YEARS 4th series

Sometimes it can feel like maintaining a healthy lifestyle is an overwhelming challenge that doesn't fit within the realities of daily life. It's tough to hold down a full-time job, eat well, train for a marathon, make homemade green juice, spend quality time with your family/partner, and meditate for an hour each day.

Of course, healthy living can incorporate all of these things (if you want it to), but it doesn't have to be defined by grandiose displays of health and fitness.

So much of healthy living is really made up of small things we do daily—things that are so small they don't feel momentous, but that, done consistently over time, add up to produce big results.

31 wellness tips for healthy & happy living Here are 31 tips to live a healthier, happier lifestyle—all simple, easy things that can be seamlessly incorporated into your daily life:

1. drink a glass of water first thing in the morning Coffee's great too, but it's best to start your day by re-hydrating with a full glass of water. Hydrating first thing in the morning helps to aid digestion, enhance skin health and boost energy.

2. take the stairs Taking the stairs instead of the elevator is a simple way to get a little more physical activity in your daily life. It also strengthens and tones your legs and core while you're at it!

3. make half your plate veggies A simple hack for healthy eating (and portion control) is to make half your plate veggies at each meal. The veggies pack in essential vitamins, minerals and other phytonutrients important for health and longevity. And, because they're rich in fiber, they help to aid digestion (aka keep you regular!) and keep you feeling full longer.

4. get a fitness tracker + track your steps Using a fitness tracker (like a Fitbit or Apple Watch) to track your steps is an easy way to make sure you're getting enough physical activity each day. We aim for 10,000 steps daily, which has significant physical and mental health benefits. A fitness tracker will also remind you to get 250 steps each hour (another important measure of health—see tip #9!). Here are our favorite fitness tracker smartwatches of 2021.

5. switch to non-toxic household cleaning products Conventional household cleaning products are full of harmful chemical ingredients that are not good for our health (or the health of our kids or pets!). Switching to healthier alternatives is a simple way to reduce your exposure to environmental toxins in your home. See our Healthy Cleaning Guide for a complete list of recommendations, and what to look for when choosing safer household cleaning products.

6. use non-toxic skincare + personal care products Similar to cleaning products, conventional skincare and personal care products are formulated with tox-

Cont. on next week series 5th

DTI...

The event was hosted by Mr. KC Gardner, Vice President of the Calamba Business Chamber. Ms. Joy Escano, Director of Calamba Business Chamber, invoked the house rules to begin the proceedings, which was followed by the opening and welcome remarks delivered by the Charter President of Calamba Business Chamber, Ms. Sherill Quintana. Afterwards, Mr. Christian Ted Tungohan, Provincial Director of DTI-Laguna, gave a message of encouragement to the attendees especially to the chamber members and non-members in their upcoming franchising ventures.

The topic of the event was "Be Your Own Boss: How to Invest in the Right Franchise." The speaker during the event was Mr. Joey Dionaldo, the Franchise Consultant for U-Franchise Sales & Management. The following resource persons also provided helpful advice on starting a franchise or selecting the best one: Ms. Rechelle Suarez, Franchise Marketing Supervisor of Philippine Sev-

No permit ...

MANILA—A leader of the House of Representatives said Wednesday the law prohibiting the "no permit, no exam" policy would relieve disadvantaged students of financial constraints and allow them to focus on their studies despite unpaid dues, while protecting the interest of private schools.

During the Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon briefing, House Committee on Basic Education and Culture chairperson Roman Romulo said the newly signed Republic Act (RA) 11984, or the "No Permit, No Exam" Prohibition Act, has a safeguard that provides a balance between ensuring the students' education and keeping schools afloat.

Romulo was referring to the law's provision mandating the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to issue the nec-

en Corp., also known as 7-Eleven; Mr. Anthony Tason, AVP for Franchise Acquisition at the TGP Pharma Inc. (The Generics Pharmacy); Ms. Aizelle Banayo, Area Business Development Manager of Minute Burger; and Ms. Melody Binas, Area Business Development Manager of BBQ Bob.

A Q&A session was facilitated following the topic discussion to open the floor to the attendees who might have questions in their minds. The attendees learned about the advantages and disadvantages of franchising. Based on the received reaction on the day, the attendees' enthusiasm in launching their own franchise increased.

Participants took part in lively conversations that promoted a cooperative learning atmosphere where knowledge sharing flourished. At the end of the day, in-depth feedback sessions yielded insightful information for improving next seminars, guaranteeing ongoing enhancement and increased value delivery (TMSulte, DTI-Laguna).

Accurate data vital in providing

FROM PAGE 1

essary certificate on the disadvantaged status of the student due to calamities, emergencies, force majeure (uncontrollable events), and other good or justifiable reasons.

He said this certification would allow students to take exams if they cannot afford to pay yet, while also protecting private schools from potential exploitation of the new legislation and closure due to anticipated operational costs.

"Again, at the end of the day, gusto po nating matulungan lang iyong estudyante at matulungan din po iyong paaralan na makolekta rin po nila iyong tuition fee sa pamamagitan ng tulong ng national government. Ang importante, tuloy-tuloy po iyong buong academic calendar ay matapos po ng estudyante (we want to help the students, as well as the schools to collect the tu-

PNP ...

Senator Alan Peter Cayetano on Friday urged the Philippine National Police (PNP) to play a pivotal role in rekindling the public's love and trust in the law.

"We are taught as human beings that part of being 'cool' is rebelling against the rules. But people forget that there's a difference between the law and the rules," Cayetano said in his speech during the groundbreaking ceremony of the newest Regional Forensic Unit-National Capital Region (RFU-NCR) crime laboratory at Camp Bagong Diwa in the City of Taguig on January 26, 2024.

Cayetano noted that the Filipinos' tendency to disregard rules, such as traffic regulations, fosters a culture of circumventing the law.

"Yes, in life sometimes you have to break the rules. [But while] you can change the rules, you can't change the law," he said.

"Sa ngayon 'pag may nangyari sa ating Barangay, palaging sinasabi na 'Kasi mahina ang pulis eh.' Hindi po. Hindi kasi natin minahal ang batas. Ang police is there to enforce, but you should start with yourself. If you enforce the law sa sarili mo, hindi mo na kailangan ng pulis," he added.

Cayetano said the new PNP crime laboratory is a "dream come true" for him, confident that it will fast-track crime investigations in the country and restore public trust in the law.

"Ito po ay pangarap ko na magkaroon ng world-class na forensic group at crime lab [sa

ition fee with the aid of the national government. What's important is for the student to finish the whole academic calendar," he said. Romulo said the government could incorporate interventions that link up underprivileged students with scholarships and financial assistance to help pay their dues under the law's implementing rules and regulations.

"Maraming programa ang ating national government

FROM PAGE 1

ating bansa]," he said. "The crime lab will be a magnificent addition to your professionalism... We should work together in re-establishing to people that if you love the law, the law is there to protect you," he added.

In concluding his speech, Cayetano urged the PNP to properly utilize the ongoing efforts of the government to modernize their operations — with a new PNP-NCRPO building on the way — and have the "same priorities" in transforming the country.

"I hope you use this goodwill na pinagaganda natin ang mga kampo... Let us have the same priorities, my brothers and sisters in uniform, dahil ito ay para sa inyo, para ating mga kababayan, at para sa ating mahal na bansang Pilipinas," he said.

In an interview with reporters after the groundbreaking ceremony, Cayetano expressed hope that the new crime lab would inspire students to venture into the field, urging the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to encourage students to pursue careers in science.

With the Taguig City University situated near the laboratory, Cayetano said he believes many students will be interested in pursuing careers in science knowing that there is a building nearby equipped with all the necessary tools and facilities.

"That's one of the reasons why we built it here. Taguig City University is just in front, to the left. We are studying how to further the medical science," he said.

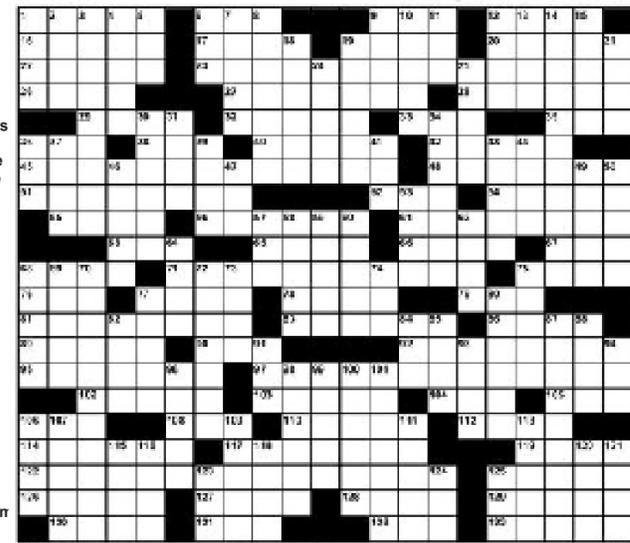
tungkol sa mga educational scholarships, educational assistance kasama na po diyan iyong DSWD pati iyong mga local governments mayroon din. Ang gusto po natin ay tulungan po iyong pamilya para mabayaran po nila iyong tuition fee na hindi pa nila mabayaran doon sa kanilang mga schools. Talagang ayaw po natin na mag-close up or mawala iyong private schools (The national government

Cont. on Page 6

ACROSS

- 1 Raises
6 Snack
9 Swich label
12 Pinnacle
16 Brilliance
17 Sports org.
19 Greek portico
20 Oslo's land, to the natives
22 Lamp cap
23 Dorothy Sayers detective
26 Soit qui mal y pense
27 Put an end to
28 Pass
29 monster
32 Mortise's partner
33 Catch
35 Mil, Coil.
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38 Spanish gold
40 Adds alcohol to
42 Neighbor of tibet
45 P.D. James detective
48 Rumbled
51 Tricks
52 Not me
54 France's longest river
55 Novel ending
56 Skier's coverup
61 Forage plants
63 "Cats" author's monogran
65 Manitoba indian
66 Hair, in Heidelberg
67 Request
71 Martha Grimes detective
75 Cuts down
76 "___tu," Verdi aria
77 Distaff counterpart
78 Off the mark
79 Slip
81 Detoured
83 London suburb
86 Teen angst
89 Storms
90 Airport abbr.
92 Endures
95 Silly
97 Agatha Christie detective
102 Frequent stopper
103 "___ what I say"
104 ___volenter; God willing
105 CIA predecessor
106 Wee dram
108 Satiric magazine
110 "... nor iron ___ cage...."
112 Skier's powder
114 Melodic

Crossword Puzzles



- 117 City on the Po
119 Virginia politician
122 Harry Kemelman detective
125 Tree-lined walk
126 Facing the pitcher
127 Read my ___
128 Patner or polish
129 Devenports
130 Anglo-Saxon laborer
131 Prevarication
132 Comic Caesar
133 Concerning

DOWN

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7 ___ of many colors
8 Journalist Ida
9 Baseball's Mel et al.

SODUKO PUZZLES

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- 49 Rub out
50 Classroom furniture
53 Lei land
57 "___ bin ein Berliner"
58 Sweep the sea
59 Uncanny
60 "Ruby Red Dress" singer
62 Actress Dunaway
64 Part of QED
68 Father Juniper
69 Regions
70 John Ball detective
72 ___ Cite, Paris
73 Surrender
74 Intense black
75 Original: Prefix
77 "___ to my ears"
80. Sugarcane shoot
82 Wine : Prefix
84 Wise bird?
85 Should have
87 Rex Stout detective
88 Greek Cupid
91 Beta Kappa leader
93 Gibbons
94 Relatives of aves:
96 Titled
98 Envelops
99 Large quantities
100 Pool shots
101 Unfastens
106 Scarlett'd place
107 Sound off
109 MCX minus DIII
111 Hawaiian hardwood
113 Synthetic fiber
115 Scottish resort
116 Locaion
118 Mature
120 Legume
121 Top quality
123 Without exception
124 Inc. , in the UK
125 " I wandered lonely ___ cloud"



MOMENTS OF MEANING

The least of things with a meaning is worth move in life than the greatest of things without it.

THINK BACK TO A TIME that was meaningful for you. I didn't say pleasant or joyful, I said meaningful. More often the meaningful events are not pleasant ones, but painful or frightening. Other times they are sudden epiphanies that bring great insight. Initially the incident may seem insignificant, and the full impact of it will not come until later. The meaningful moments focus us on the significant of our lives and how we spend our time.

How have these events become our teachers and guides? What lessons have you learned that have led you to where you are and the person you have become? Many times we have no idea how the decisions and choices we make lead us to experiences that become life altering.

Today, ask yourself what motivates you, what gives your life meaning? Find the answer, and you will find yourself. Look back at meaningful events; think about what gave you joy as a child. When you combine the two things, you will be living the life intended for you.

Solution of the Week

Today take the time to explore what is meaningful for you. Ponder past events and note the lessons that they brought you.

WORDHUNT

L B M Y S T E R I O U S M
O E C Z P G M A G I C A L
G A Y P E R F E C T R S G
B S M Y T H U X J S C P H
E T T A L E S Q S Q D A U
A Q D A J T U N I C O R N
U R A I N B O W R F T K Y
T F M Y S T I C A L G L S
I Z O N R K O B I I F E W
F E L E G E N D A R Y Y I
U V F A N T A S Y X V F L
L F A I R Y T L E D D H D

MYTH
UNICORN
FAIRY
FANTASY
MAGICAL
PERFECT
LEGEND-
ARY
MYSTICAL

RAINBOW
BEAUTIFUL
WILD
SPARKLE
MYSTERIOUS
BEAST
REAL
TALES

Gatchalian: PH should learn from Vietnam on education spending, best practices

The Philippines should learn from Vietnam when it comes to their best practices in education, including their efficient education spending, Senator Win Gatchalian said.

The lawmaker reiterated that while increasing resources can help improve education performance to a certain extent, it is equally important to ensure the optimal use of available resources. He pointed out that while there is not much difference between the two countries when it comes to funding their education, Vietnam's learner performance is way higher than that of Filipinos.

The Philippines spends 3.8% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) while Vietnam spends 4.06%. On average, the Philippines spends around P55,000 per learner every year from Kindergarten until the age of 15, while Vietnam spends on average around P69,000 per learner every year from Kindergarten until the age of 15.

Based on the results of the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment

(PISA), 72% or 7 out of 10 Vietnamese learners aged 15 have reached Level 2 or the minimum proficiency level in mathematics. In the Philippines, only 16% or less than 2 out of 10 learners have reached the minimum proficiency in mathematics.

At a minimum, learners who have reached Level 2 or the minimum proficiency level in mathematics, can interpret and recognize, without direct instructions, mathematical representations of simple situations such as comparing the total distance across two alternative routes or converting prices into a different currency.

"Bagama't hindi

nagkakalayo ang ginagastos ng Vietnam at Pilipinas para sa edukasyon, nakita naman natin sa datos na mas mataas ang marka ng mga mag-aaral mula Vietnam. Mahalagang matuto tayo sa halimbawa ng Vietnam dahil ipinakit nila ang kahalagahan ng mas mainan na paggamit ng mga resources at mas mabisang paggasta para sa edukasyon," said Gatchalian, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Basic Education.

The Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) is set to study Vietnam's best practices in a visit scheduled later this month, according to Gatchalian, EDCOM II's co-chairperson.



"This initiative reflects a proactive approach to enhancing our education system by drawing insights from the successes of Vietnam, with the aim of identifying strategies and methodologies that can be adapted to elevate educational standards in our country," he added.

Analyzing the latest PISA results, Gatchalian said that Vietnam's poorest learners, or those at the bottom 10% of the Economic, Social, and Cultural Status (ESCS), scored 91 points higher than the Philippines' poorest learners.

The average score of Vietnam's poorest learners was 427, while the Philippines' average score was 336. END

CARD LFC celebrates 11th year Legacy of Empowering Microentrepreneurs

CARD Leasing and Finance Corporation (CARD LFC) celebrates its 11th year of providing financial services to economically challenged entrepreneurs, families, and communities on January 10, 2024.

Despite challenges, CARD LFC's good performance reflects CARD MRI's unwavering commitment to community service. Torres underscores the institution's dedication to eradicating poverty by supporting clients in establishing sustainable businesses through affordable leasing and financing services.

As of December 31, 2023, CARD LFC has outstanding loans exceeding PHP 489 million and holds over PHP 87 million worth of equipment for lease. The institution has assisted more than 18,000 clients, leaving a cumulative impact evident in Off-Grid related Solar Projects that have benefited over 15,000 families.

Since its inception, CARD LFC has been a cornerstone of financial empowerment, providing start-up, vehicle, and gadget loans to clients within and outside the CARD MRI network.

As it celebrates 11 years of empowering dreams, CARD LFC commits to remaining steadfast in its mission to catalyze positive change in the lives of those it serves. PR.

For more information, visit its official website at <https://www.cardmri.com/clfc/> or Facebook page, @CARDLFCOfficial.

No permit ...

has various programs providing educational scholarships, educational assistance, including those from the DSWD and the local governments. What we want is to help families pay for tuition fees that they can't pay to schools. We don't want private schools to close down," he said.

RA 11984 covers all public and private basic education (K to 12) institutions, higher education institutions, and technical-vocational institutions.

Under RA 11984, all public and private educational institutions are mandated to accommodate and allow disadvantaged students with unpaid tuition and other school fees to take the periodic and final exams without requiring a permit. In the case of K to 12 students, the mandate will be for the entire school year, according to the new law.

FROM PAGE 2

All covered public and private educational institutions found guilty of violating RA 11984 will be subject to administrative sanctions that may be imposed by the Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. (PNA)

EDITORIAL:

Expanded PH-US partnership

Ample proof that Philippine-American relations are on the upswing and expected to grow even stronger in the years ahead is the invitation extended by US President Joe Biden to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to join a three-way summit in Washington, DC with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in April.

This is the first such trilateral summit that, according to the White House, would discuss a "shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific" and focus on enhancing economic and security ties amid rising tensions with China.

The common denominator of the Philippines and Japan is that we are both staunch US allies. We also have territorial disputes with China.

We have to deal firmly with Beijing's increasingly aggressive actions in the West Philippine Sea, while Tokyo has to contend with China's claim over the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.

The trilateral meeting in April will therefore be highly anticipated—and closely monitored by Beijing, definitely—as the Biden administration is expected to reiterate its 'ironclad' guarantee of full support for our joint efforts to resist China's territorial ambitions in the region.

Biden and Marcos met in the White House last year where they discussed ways to further expand the Philippine-US alliance, including strengthening their defense cooperation.

Among the agreements they forged last year were the planned conclusion of a key intelligence sharing pact and the adoption of bilateral defense guidelines aimed at institutionalizing "key bilateral priorities, mechanisms and processes to deepen alliance cooperation and interoperability across land, sea, air, space and cyberspace."

Just this week, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with President Marcos to discuss ways to advance the partnership of both countries, particularly in the economic sphere, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The American official's visit follows a week after the United States sent a high-level trade and investment mission to the Philippines.

We expect the Philippines to benefit from even closer ties with Washington in all aspects, from the political and diplomatic to the economic and defense spheres in the years ahead, united in a shared commitment to democratic principles and sustained economic advance based on mutual benefit and mutual trust.

With China's increasing assertiveness in enforcing its claim over practically the whole of the South China Sea on the basis of a mythical 'tendash line,' we need to strengthen defense cooperation with both the US and Japan to protect our national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

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DILG ...



FROM PAGE 1

MANILA – Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Benhur Abalos on Friday urged the public to participate in the advocacy walk on March 23 as a demonstration of their support to fight the scourge of illegal drugs.

Abalos was referring to the BIDA Walk which will be held at around 4 a.m. at the SM Mall of Asia Concert Grounds that hopes to gather thousands of anti-drug advocates and supporters to celebrate the 1st anniversary of the government's flagship Buhay Ingatan, Droga'y Ayawan (BIDA) program.

"I know our kababayans (countrymen) are used to the BIDA Fun Run, but in its anniversary, we want to be more inclusive, hence, we opted for the BIDA Walk. Basta gusto mong makisama sa labang pamahalaan sa iligal na droga, welcome ka (As long as you support the government's fight against illegal drugs, you are welcome)" he said in a statement.

Abalos said the celebration is a fitting commemoration of the BIDA program which is "the driving force in the government's vision for a drug-free Philippines."

The BIDA Walk

will commence from three starting points –the CCP Open Grounds and Cuneta Astrodome both in Pasay City; and at SMDC Festival Grounds in Parañaque City.

From the three starting points, the participants will walk towards SM Mall of Asia Globe Ronda in Pasay City where they will converge.

The walk route will be led by Abalos together with ex-Senator Manny Pacquiao, Pasay City Mayor Imelda Calixto-Rubiano, and Liga ng mga Barangay presidents and Sangguniang Kabataan Federation presidents of the National Capital Region.

Abalos said participants can also expect performances from most sought-after artists from partner entertainment networks GMA 7 and ABS-CBN. A chance to win raffle prizes amounting to a total of PHP100,000 from SM Supermalls also await the participants, while Jolibee and private partners will provide food and water.

Abalos also reminded participants to come prepared with proper running shoes and a comfortable white shirt, extra clothing, a tumbler, an umbrella and a portable or handheld fan. (PNA)

Marcos...

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has signed five new laws renaming circumferential and bypass roads, a bridge and a national highway in Central Visayas, Ilocos Region, Northern Mindanao and in the Bicol Region; and creating a new barangay in Surigao del Sur.

Under Republic Act No. 11987, Marcos renamed Bohol Island Circumferential Road as President Carlos P. Garcia Circumferential Road, which traverses through Barangay Poblacion III, towards the north of Tagbilaran City, and returns to the same barangay from the eastern side of the city.

The President also signed Republic Act No. 11988 that renames the Urdaneta City Bypass Road in Pangasinan to

Ambassador Eduardo "Danding" M. Cojuangco Jr. Avenue.

The avenue traverses Barangays Nancayasan, Santo Domingo, Santa Lucia, Camantiles and Anonas.

The Tambacan Bridge that traverses the Iligan River in Barangay Tambacan, Iligan City in the Northern Mindanao Region was renamed Mariano Lluha Badelles Sr. Bridge under Republic Act 11989.

The Chief Executive also signed into law Republic Act 11990, naming a Camarines Sur national road as Speaker Arnulfo "Noli" Fuentesbella Highway, stretching from Barangay San Juan Bautista, traversing through Barangays Tagongtong, Abucayan, Hiwaclay, Digidigon, Balaynan and

Solon...

MANILA – Senate Majority Leader Joel Villanueva on Thursday called on the government to exhaust all efforts in ensuring that aid and support are provided for overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

No Filipino should be left behind when it comes to providing immediate and adequate government services, Villanueva said in a news release.

"Dapat ilapit po ang serbisyo ng gobyerno sa bawat Pilipino saan man sila sa mundo (Government services must be brought closer to all Filipinos wherever they are in the world)," he said.

He said prioritizing the welfare and protection of the country's "modern heroes" is one way to recognize "their hardships and deeds, not only for their families, but for the country and economy as well."

According to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, personal remittances from OFWs in 2023 amounted to USD37.2 billion, accounting for 8.5 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

Villanueva was among the lawmakers who advocated for the inclusion in the 2024 national budget of PHP1 billion for the Agarang Kalinga at Saklolo para sa mga OFW na Nangangailangan

(AKSYON) Fund under the budget of the Department of Migrant Workers; PHP1 billion for the Assistance to Nationals fund; and PHP200 million for the legal assistance fund under the budget of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The said funds are for the provision of medical, financial, legal, and other forms of assistance, including repatriation, evacuation, rescue and other necessary interventions to protect Filipinos abroad.

Last Sunday, Villanueva attended an OFW gathering at the International Center in Sham Shui Po, Kowloon, Hong Kong, where more than 3,000 OFWs received medical, educational and other forms of assistance through the Tesdaman Action Center, the senator's advocacy for OFWs.

According to the Overseas Workers' Welfare Administration, 173,123 Filipino workers are in Hong Kong, most of whom are domestic workers.

The Philippine Consulate and the Migrant Workers Office headed by Consul General Germinia Usudan was also invited to the event to provide consular and migrant workers-related services. (Leonel Abasola/PNA)

FROM PAGE 1

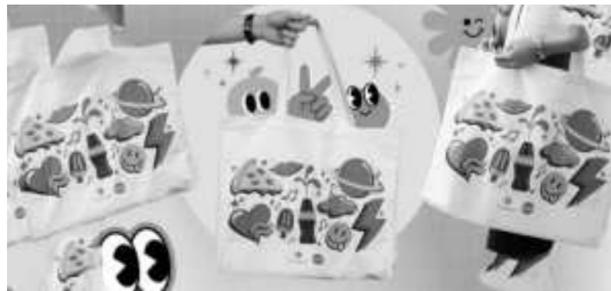
on Elections to conduct and supervise a plebiscite to be held in Barangay Guinhalinan within three months from the effectivity of the law.

The plebiscite will be shouldered by the municipality of Barobo.

The Barobo mayor is tasked to appoint a Punong Barangay (village chief), seven Sangguniang Barangay (village council) members, a Sangguniang Kabataan (youth council) chair and seven councilors until their successors have been elected and qualified.

Marcos signed all five laws on March 21 and they will take effect 15 days following their publications in the Official Gazette or a newspaper of general circulation. (PNA)

Tote-ally Awesome Deal Alert! Score a Free TOTE Bag with Your Coca-Cola Feast at SM Foodcourts!



sure to tag along your friends and family for this tote-tastic feast.

This epic collab is happening at ALL SM Foodcourt locations nationwide, plus select Food Hall branches. Treat yourself to your favorite food court fare – think sizzling steak, overflowing halo-halo, or that perfect plate of Bibimbop – and walk away with a stylish tote that's #OOTD-worthy.

Here's the Tea on This Tote-ally Awesome Promo:

- What you gotta grab: P499 single-receipt food purchase from your favorite SM Foodcourt or select Food Hall branch, PLUS a 1.5L bottle of Coca-Cola OR three (3) 16oz Coca-Cola cans.
- What you get: A FREE tote bag! #SustainableQueens #SustainableKings

Listen up, foodies and Coca-Cola fanatics! This is not a drill. We repeat, this is NOT a drill! SM Foodcourts are serving up a promo so good, you'll be cartwheeling (or maybe just waddling happily) to your nearest branch.

Choose green, get a reusable tote today! For every P499 single-receipt food purchase, you'll score a FREE tote bag – just by adding a 1.5L bottle of Coca-Cola or grabbing three of those refreshing 16oz cans. Yes, you read that right. Free. Tote. Bags. Be

SMFB delivers record profit of P38.1 billion in 2023

San Miguel Food and Beverage Inc. (SMFB) ended 2023 with outstanding financial results, despite the challenges of an unpredictable macroeconomic landscape.

Consolidated sales reached P379.8 billion, a 6% increase from the previous year, with all business units reporting growth in sales compared to 2022. This was attributed to improved volumes and pricing strategies.

EBITDA was up 7% at P66.8 billion, while net income jumped 10% to P38.1 billion, the highest net income figure achieved by the Group since SMFB's consolidation in 2018.

"Our success in 2023 reflects our team's dedication and drive for excellence. We're determined to build on our gains, and continue finding ways to excite and delight our markets, while delivering the same high quality, best value products that have been trusted and enjoyed by generations," Ramon S. Ang, SMFB president and CEO said.

SMFB's Beer



division reported an 8% increase in consolidated sales to P147.3 billion, fueled by higher demand in both local and international markets. Domestic sales volumes, however, are still 25% below pre-pandemic levels.

Domestic sales rose 8% to P131.7 billion, boosted by effective marketing strategies and

expanded sales efforts. International revenue also grew by 7%, propelled by strong demand for San Miguel's global brands, such as Red Horse, leading to significant growth in regions like South China, Thailand, and through Exports. EBITDA and net income increased by 9% and 16% respectively, with net income reached P25.3

billion.

Its Spirits division also reported higher growth, with revenues up 13% to P53.6 billion. This was driven by efforts to enhance brand equity through consistent advertising, consumer promotions, and expanding market reach. Both EBITDA and net income saw substantial increases of 41% and 55%, amounting to P9.4 billion and P7.0 billion, respectively.

Meanwhile, its Food division reported revenues of P178.8 billion, a 2% increase from the previous year. This was achieved through strategic pricing adjustments across segments, complemented by aggressive marketing to stimulate demand.

Although the poultry segment faced challenges, including capacity constraints and pressure from imported frozen chicken that impacted prices and overall performance, the Food division concluded the year with a net income of P18.3 billion, exceeding pre-pandemic figures despite a slight decrease from the prior year. END



On March 13, 2024, at SM City Dasmariñas, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) held a remarkable event to honor the brilliance and dedication of Filipino students in the realm of science and mathematics. The 2023 Youth Excellence in Science (YES) Awards brought together 49 outstanding students from various schools across the Province of Cavite who have showcased their tal-

ents on international stages, earning accolades in prestigious competitions.

The YES Awards, an initiative by the DOST, aims to shine a spotlight on the remarkable achievements of Filipino youth in the fields of science and mathematics on an international platform. This recognition not only celebrates their individual successes but also inspires other young minds to pursue excellence in these critical areas.

The event commenced with a warm welcome from Ms. Editha Ragodo-Tayko, the Mall Manager of SM City Dasmariñas, setting the tone for an evening of celebration and recognition. Following the welcome remarks, Ms. Emelita P. Bagsit, Regional Director of DOST IV-A, and Engr. Albert G. Mariño, Deputy Director of DOST, delivered inspirational video messages, highlighting the importance of nurtur-

ing talent in science and mathematics and the role of these disciplines in shaping the future.

The highlight of the evening was the awarding ceremony, where the exemplary students were presented with gold, silver, and bronze medals, along with certificates of recognition. Each medal and certificate symbolized not only their remarkable achievements but also the countless hours of hard work, dedi-

VP Sara ... March 27-April 02, 2024 FROM PAGE 1

MANILA – Vice President and Education Secretary Sara Duterte has assured immediate action on the alleged discrepancies in the voucher program under the Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE).

Duterte made the response in an ambush interview on the sidelines of her engagements in Cambodia as the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) President on Thursday.

"Ngayon kung mayroon tayong nakikita na discrepancy doon sa billing ng private school, agad nating inaakusahan (Now if we are seeing discrepancies in the billing of private schools, we are acting on it promptly)," she said.

Duterte mentioned establishing the Government Assistance and Subsidies Office (GASO) to look into the reported discrepancies in the billing issued by the

education, and perseverance they invested in their pursuit of excellence.

Ms. Gilda S. De Jesus, Provincial Director of DOST, concluded the program with closing remarks filled with encouragement and congratulations for the students. Her words echoed the sentiment of pride felt by all present, not just for the achievements of these young individuals but also for the promise they hold for the future of science and mathematics in the Philippines. -Axel A. Sarte

Russia in mourning after deadly concert hall attack

ISTANBUL – Russia is observing a national day of mourning on Sunday after a deadly attack at a concert hall in the Moscow region.

Flags were lowered to half-mast, while people laid flowers at Crocus City Hall, the concert hall where armed men opened fire on Friday, killing at least 133 people and injuring 152 others.

President Vladimir Putin has pledged to punish those behind the "purposeful massacre,"

private schools.

"Unang-una, hindi natin pinapabayaran, sina-stop payment natin sila (First of all, we are not issuing payments, we're holding the payments)," she said.

"Pangalawa, kapag nabayaran na at nakita na hindi karapat-dapat o mayroong mali o mayroong problema doon sa billing, pinapa-refund natin at pinapabalik sa Department of Education (Second, if it's already paid and we see that it's ineligible, either there's mistake or problem in the billing, we are asking for a refund to be brought back to the Department of Education)," Duterte added.

She also mentioned coordination with the Private Education Assistance Committee (PEAC) in terms of securing the voucher program billings from private schools.

On Wednesday, Senator Sherwin Gatchalian flagged the alleged bulk of undocumented beneficiaries of the E-GASTPE, during the Senate Committee on Basic Education's hearing. Gatchalian said the DepEd expected refunds to reach as high as PHP239 million, with some schools having PHP80 million and PHP68 million refunds, separately among others, based on the PEAC report.

In sum, the said amount would account for almost 19,000 undocumented voucher program beneficiaries. (PNA)

Enchanted Kingdom award for Best Retail Visual Merchandise Display



Enchanted Kingdom, the first and only world class theme park in the Philippines, won the highly-coveted International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) Brass Ring Excellence Award for the Best Retail Visual Merchandise Display category during the IAAPA Honors 2024 held last March 3

at The Venetian Resort in Las Vegas, Nevada, USA. The IAAPA Honors 2024 recognized "innovative contributions that have propelled the global amusement and attractions industry forward."

The International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) is the premier global trade asso-

ciation of the amusement and attractions industry. Based in Orlando, Florida, USA, IAAPA has been in existence for more than 100 years and counts on all global industry players such as Disney and Universal Parks as well as Enchanted Kingdom as members and include leading industry supplier companies, consultants

bags international

and individual members from more than 100 countries all over the world.

"This award further fuels our aspiration to be a world-class integrated attractions destination in Asia-Pacific. Gearing toward our 30th anniversary next year in 2025, we are committed to deliver new, fresh and innovative attractions and experiences to all guests as we consolidate and firm up our position as the Philippine leader in wholesome family leisure and entertainment and the pioneer world-class theme park in the country," shared Mr. Cesar Mario O. Mamon, EK Chairman and President.

EK's official entry, "Eldar's Specialty Shoppe", is the flagship retail store featuring EK's homegrown jolly and wise Eldar the Wizard. "This dainty crown jewel of a shoppe infused a lot of elements arousing the interest of deeply curious millennials, the incredibly tech-savvy Gen Zs, and all other guests across various generations," said Ms. Cherina S. Consunji, EK's Head of Merchandise.

The specialty shop also features the characters in The Enchanted Kingdom Story Musicale, EK's original play starring the popular Eldar the Wizard and the twin princesses of Enchanted Kingdom, Princess Victoria and Princess Madeline.

For more information about the Eldar's Specialty Shoppe and upcoming events at EK, visit <https://www.enchantedkingdom.ph> and EK's official social media accounts @enchantedkingdom.ph for Facebook and Tiktok, and @ek_philippines for Twitter and Instagram.



Meeting the basic healthcare needs of



Silangeños-Cavite provincial government's commitment in nurturing the well-being of the Caviteños was once again witnessed in a medical mission bringing basic healthcare services to the Municipality of Silang, Cavite on March 18, 2024.

Silang Municipal Mayor Kevin Alston Anarna, alongside Sangguniang Bayan members, heartily welcomed the medical mission team, conveying their esteemed appreciation for the PGC's continuous love and support to their community and

constituents. During the course of the program, the OPHO technical team worked together with the Silang RHU in carrying out free check-ups and consultation, benefitting a total of 872 patients. Likewise, 70 residents consulted with

Silang public dentists for their oral health concerns.

Staff from the Office of the Provincial Governor led the distribution of prescribed medicines, vitamin supplement, and insect repellent lotion to the Silangeños, relieving the worries and concerns for the needed medication.

Other services rendered during the mission were free eye check-up, pneumococcal vaccines, and anti-rabies vaccines for fur babies.

The initiative truly served as an avenue for the PGC to connect with its people, assess their healthcare needs, even those in the marginalized areas. - Jam Elisse M. Reyes

DOH expects to get pertussis vaccines by June

MANILA – The Department of Health (DOH) is expecting additional doses of vaccines against pertussis that is expected to arrive in the Philippines by June this year, according to Health Undersecretary and spokesman Dr. Eric Tayag.

"Ang nasa inventory namin ay nakapagbigay ang DOH sa Quezon City ng 1,500 doses at ito ay magagamit nila. At habang hihiniintay iyong bagong supply na baka sa June pa dumating ay mayroon tayong mga antibiotics para kung hindi maiwasan ang pagkaha-wa, may maibibigay na gamot," Tayag said.

Tayag made the remarks in a weekly news

forum in Quezon City on Saturday where he was asked if how many doses, in terms of percentage, of vaccine against pertussis are available in the Philippines, and if when are they expected to arrive in the country.

He explained the DOH is now doing quick procurement of 5-in-1 vaccines for pertussis, or popularly known as whooping cough after some cases were already reported in Quezon City – which has already declared an outbreak – Calabarzon and the Visayas region.

Once procured, Tayag said they will immediately distribute the vaccines to the affected areas in the country. (PND)